

**THE TRAUMA OF HUMAN DISPLACEMENT IN MARYSE
CONDE'S *TRAVERSÉE DE LA MANGROVE (CROSSING THE
MANGROVE)***

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Abstract

*Human displacement is the forced movement of people from their homes and native environment into a completely new abode and culture. It is an unforeseen relocation that is often provoked by slavery, colonialism, natural disasters, inter-ethnic war, epidemics and technological motive and which is largely characterised by psychological consequences. It is against the foregoing that this study investigates the causes of human displacement and the attendant trauma of the unscheduled voyage of unknown destination in Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*. This study adopts an aspect of Freud psychoanalytical theory: id, ego and superego in understanding the trauma caused by the manner in which people of lighter complexion treat and dehumanise the Negroes in Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*. The methodology adopted in this article is content analysis which is a detailed and relatively objective examination of the structure, style, imagery and other aspects of a literary work. Several instances of human displacement, xenophobia, trauma, discrimination are discussed in the study. The paper concludes by noting that the trauma of human displacement is real given the psychological challenges faced by migrants in their new environment. The text also provokes interminable literary discourse because the end seems like the beginning of an unending literary puzzle.*

Keywords: displacement, trauma, xenophobia, Caribbean, discrimination

Résumé

Le déplacement humain est le mouvement forcé des gens de leurs foyers et leurs environnements natifs vers une habitation et une culture entièrement nouvelle. Il est un transfert inattendu qui est toujours provoqué par l'esclavage, le colonialisme, les désastres naturels, la guerre inter ethnique, les épidémies et le motif technologique et qui est surtout caractérisé par des conséquences psychologiques. Par conséquent, cette communication vise à examiner les raisons du déplacement humain et le traumatisme associé au voyage inattendu vers destination inconnue dans *Traversée de la Mangrove* de Maryse Condé. La communication embrasse une partie de la théorie psyhanalytique, id, ego et superego pour comprendre le traumatisme

provoqué par la manière dont les Blancs maltraitent et déshumanisent les Noirs dans *Traversée de la Mangrove* de Conde. La méthodologie adopté dans cette communication est *content analysis* qui est un examen détaillé et relativement objectif de la structure, le style, l'image et les autres aspects d'une oeuvre littéraire. Plusieurs exemples de déplacement humain, xénophobie, le traumatisme, de la discrimination sont discutés dans l'article. L'étude se termine en affirmant que le traumatisme du déplacement humain est authentique à cause de défis psychologiques qu'affrontent les immigrants dans leurs nouvelles habitations. L'oeuvre littéraire présente aussi un discours littéraire interminable parce que la fin paraît comme le commencement d'une incertitude littéraire interminable.

Mot-clés: déplacement, traumatisme, xénophobie, caraïbe, discrimination

Introduction

Human displacement refers to the forced movement of people from their home or country of origin. It is a change of abode from one's native environment into a completely new habitation. Displacement is also used interchangeably with the term forced migration. Human displacement can be provoked by different reasons which include epidemic, disasters, intertribal conflicts, technological development among other factors. Disaster-induced displacement can occur when a large number of a given population moves en masse as a result of natural disasters or an event with catastrophic consequences. This may include earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruption, landslide and heat waves. Conflict -induced displacement arises from disagreement between two ethnic groups resulting in a weaker group being forced to move. Examples of conflict-induced displacement include war, or any other forced movement due to persecution as a result of race, religion, or political views. Human displacement can also occur due to foreign invasion in form of enslavement or colonialism. Several millions of Africans were forcefully uprooted from their native environment during the inglorious Slave Trade and colonialism and taken to new settlements to be used as slaves. In the same view, several territories were forcefully taken from their original owners and settlers, thereby forcing the native settlers to relocate. Development-induced displacement occurs due to construction of dams, irrigation, bridges, roads and other developmental projects which necessitate

unforeseen movements of native population. However, one of the major human challenges today is the growth in the number of internally- displaced persons (IDP). The Internally displaced are people who are forced to flee their homes for reasons like war, civil unrest, political crisis and gross human rights abuse but who choose to remain in their country.

Human displacement is an important topic in Caribbean literature because of diverse people and various territories that make up the Caribbean region, a region renowned for its slave history and rich mixture of cultures. As Sampietro, cited by Tijani (2013:13) rightly puts it, the literature of the Caribbean is an ideal meeting- point, the place where different cultures of two boundless continents and the ghosts of four colonial empires come together. Like most other literature, Francophone Caribbean literature exists in the oral and written forms. It is reputed for the quality of the productions both in the language, the style of the authors as well as the themes treated. The uniqueness of Caribbean literature lies principally in the multilingual and multicultural origins of its authors. Sanusi (2013:2) asserts that Caribbean literature of French expression encompasses Francophone literature, from Guadeloupe and Martinique, but also the wordy Haitian literature, including authors from French Guyana. These islands are the principal places of literary production of the Francophone Caribbean. The point being emphasised here is that human displacement contributed largely to the diverse nature of Caribbean literature given the various nationalities that migrated to the region. These migrants faced various psychological challenges in the Caribbean islands which ultimately resulted in trauma.

Trauma

Trauma is a type of injury to the psyche that happens as a result of ruthlessly upsetting occurrence. It is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved with that experience. Littlewood (1997) states that,

Trauma is a direct personal experience of an event that

involves actual or threatened death or severe injury, threat to one's physical integrity, witnessing an event that involves the above experience, learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or close associate (p.264).

The trauma therapist affirms also that trauma is any repulsive occurrence that can trigger adverse reaction, short or long psychological disorder.

Joh (2005) also defines trauma as:

An aggressively induced injury or a weepy distress with an enduring consequences. It is an aggressively imposed emotional injury with persistent significance, the permanent effects are emotional and also physical (p.79).

Traumatic experiences often involve physical trauma that threatens one's survival and sense of security. Typical causes of trauma include harassment, embarrassment, abandonment, abusive relationship, rejection, co-dependence, physical assault, sexual abuse, partner battery, employment discrimination, police brutality, judicial corruption, bullying and domestic violence. Sutton (2002:116) states that trauma is an inexplicable event that is far beyond the ordinary and which overwhelms one's resilience and defence to function as normal. The result is that what one had previously held safe is no longer reliably so and one's perception of the world changes irrevocably. Garland (1998:105), on his part, notes that trauma causes a kind of wound that renders useless the protective filtering processes through which we have come to feel safe in the world. Consequently, one begins to feel unsafe even where there is no element of harm or danger as a result of past unpleasant events.

This study is based on psychoanalytic theory which is the theory of personality organization and the dynamic of personality development that guides psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology. The psychoanalytic position is that early experiences influence all human behaviour. It attempts to emphasize three main issues: the *id*, the *ego* and the *superego*. Psychoanalysts say that all

human personality is comprised of these closely integrated functions.

The trauma of Xenophobia and Death in Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*

Francis Sanchez finds himself inhabiting a riverside of a Caribbean village where the villagers avoid him like a plague because of his ambiguous identity. It is remarkable to observe that Condé's protagonist signifies different notions to diverse people. To some, he is a hated intruder and a flirt while others believe that he is a lost soul who inspires sympathy. Some other people think that he is a foreigner who is determined to forget his past but to some, he has returned to the land of his heritage. However, everyone is of the opinion that he carries the burden of his past sin and for that reason, he relocates from another world to the universe of Rivière au Sel. According to Francis himself, he is attempting to atone for the sins of his ancestors, presumed to be slave owners and who were cursed by slaves. It is thus for this reason that Francis harbours an ever-present trauma and fears that he has come home to die. Among the themes discussed in the text are xenophobia, trauma, death, identity, irrational sexual behaviour, among others.

The prevailing xenophobia, racism and hatred in Rivière au Sel date back to the time of ancestors. This xenophobic attitude largely influenced the relationship between the indigenous Caribbean people and Francis Sanchez who is seen as a stranger. He is greatly disliked in the village as a result of his ambiguous identity, his personality and profession. He is known in the village as a vagabond and a cur, this makes the villagers to avoid him like a plague. Condé states in her text, « *Car tous, à un moment donné, avaient traité Francis Sanchez de vagabond et de chien* » (p.20). [*Because everybody, at one time had treated Francis Sanchez as a vagabond and a dog*]. He is ultimately accused of being lazy in the village where physical labour is the norm. This is because he remains seated behind his typewriter and engages in typing his manuscripts, an activity that does not correspond to the

villagers concept of work. The community cannot understand his literary preoccupation that does not involve dissipation of physical energy like most men in the Caribbean sugarcane plantation. The ambiguity of his profession elicits suspicion and envy from the villagers who ask ignorantly.

Que faisait Francis? Il installa une table de bois blanc sur sa galerie, posa dessus une machine à écrire et s'assit derrière elle. Quand les gens, surpris et démangés par la curiosité arrêterent la camionnette de Moïse pour lui demander ce qu'il faisait là, ils s'entendirent répondre que c'était un écrivain. Écrivain? Qu'est ce qu'un écrivain?

What was Francis doing? He set up a white deal table on the veranda, placed a typewriter on it and sat down in front of it. When the villagers who were intrigued and itching to know what he was doing up there stopped Moïse's van, they were told he was a writer. Writer? What is a writer? (our translation)

The villagers are of the opinion that Sanchez is not only unproductive and arrogant but he is also a flirt. He pretends to demonstrate love to the young unsuspecting village girls thereby having carnal knowledge of them even when he is not prepared to engage in serious relationship with any of them. Among his most unsettling actions, from the community perspective are his having kept and impregnated so many young girls. He therefore incurs the wrath, jealousy and loathing of his victims' families who feel traumatised by his absurd behaviour.

The author uses her novel to discuss the challenges of xenophobia, the fear of foreigners, which is prevalent in the text. It is an intense fear or dislike of foreign foreigners, their customs and culture. Discrimination against people of different cultures and origins exists up till today across the Caribbean region. Negative attitudes towards foreign nationals from other countries are a common occurrence in the region and are often related to social and economic policies or decisions taken by States to limit or restrict inward migration or the perception that alien nationals are stealing jobs or draining the national

purse and social services. Xenophobic tendencies also include fear of loss of national culture, morals and values to those of the migrants and mistrust of nationals from organisations that acquire local companies. It should be noted that most Caribbean countries are not party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all migrant workers and members of their families. This explains the reason for the resurgence of xenophobia which is visible in public discourse, the media and political rhetoric, normally targeted against migrants, refugees, people of African descent and others. According to Anastasia Crickley (1988) the chairman of the Committee on the Elimination of Xenophobia and Racial Discrimination, we still live in a world where we witness politicians and leaders using hateful and divisive rhetoric to divide instead of unite societies. Race-based police brutality and retaliatory killings, waves of hate crimes against minorities, discrimination, violence towards migrants and refugees are all manifestations of xenophobia still thriving in the Caribbean region.

It is remarkable to note that xenophobia is the product of displacement because the intense fear being nursed for foreigners is occasioned by their forced movement to the new environment and the indigenous people's absolute ignorance about the mission of foreigners. When Francis Sanchez arrives Rivière au Sel, the small Guadeloupian community, the natives are sceptical about his personality and his mission. As soon as they discover ignorantly that he is from Cuba, they make up their mind to not only avoid any contact with him but also to work towards his expulsion from the community. Maryse Condé states in her text:

Dès qu'on avait entendu que c'était un Cubain, papa avait déclaré qu'il y avait trop d'étrangers en Guadeloupe et qu'il aurait fallu l'expulser avec tous ces Dominicains et ces Haïtiens (p.95).

As soon as people got to know that he was a Cuban, papa declared that there were just too many foreigners in Guadeloupe, and that it would be necessary to send him away from the land with all the Dominicans and the Haitians. (our

translation)

This is a clear case of xenophobia which is hatred and non-tolerance of foreigners. The villagers do not hide their ill-feelings, contempt and hatred for Sanchez and this makes them to avoid him completely like a plague even without knowing his authentic source and identity. Sanchez says:

Tu ne sais qui je suis. Cela m'étonne! Les gens de Rivière au Sel racontent toutes qualités d'histoires sur mon compte. Ils me fuient comme la peste. Personne ne me parle... Les gens de Rivière au Sel ne m'aiment pas.

You don't know who I am, that surprises me! Rivière au Sel people narrate different stories about my identity. They avoid me like a plague. Nobody speaks to me. Rivière au Sel people do not like me. (our translation)

He is surprised that the villagers can harbour such negative thoughts about him even to the point of killing him. The author introduces Man Sonson, the village herbalist, who recounts how different people had approached her to help in harming Sanchez. It shows the determination of the villagers to get rid of him, Man Sonson remarks:

Pourtant si je vous dressais la liste complète de tous ceux que j'ai vus défiler sur mon plancher pour me demander de lui faire du mal ou même carrément de soulager la terre des vivants de son poids, vous n'en reviendriez pas! (p.82).

If I draw up a complete list for you of all those who trod my floor to ask me to harm him or even rid the earth of his being, you would not believe me. (our translation)

Such is the hatred and evil thought being shown and nursed against Sanchez for his identity as a foreigner and for his irrational sex behaviour which results in unwanted pregnancies of young and promising girls. To worsen the situation, Sanchez is not prepared to assume responsibilities of any of the young girls. The author makes reference to Carmelien, a young man who does not hide his hatred for Sanchez for his reckless sexual abuse of young girls. He is upset by Sanchez for putting Mira and Vilma, his own sister, in family way

without any marital plan for any of them. Carmelien says bluntly:

Je ne peux pas cacher que je le haïssais plus pour ce qu'il avait fait à Mira que pour ce qu'il avait fait à ma propre sœur, Vilma (p.173).

I can't hide the fact that I hate him more on account of what he did to Mira and also what he did to my own sister, Vilma. (our translation)

This predatory sexual attitude of Sanchez makes him to incur the wrath and jealousy of most families in the community.

Xenophobia forecloses interracial-marriage in the Caribbean island and this explains the rationale for the community's unfriendly attitude towards Sanchez. The villagers do not expect the stranger to relate with their female children or put them in the family way. In the same vein, they equally forbid their children from relating or marrying strangers for any reason. Condé, the author, introduces Man Sonson, who expresses her surprise and disappointment when her second male child, Robert, marries a white woman. The disenchanted woman cries all night because of the shame of her son's attitude which normally attracts severe punishment. Man Sonson states:

Mon fils Robert le deuxième s'est marié en métropole avec une femme blanche qu'il a connue dans le bureau de poste où il travaille. Une femme blanche! J'ai pleuré toutes les larmes de mon corps. C'est que nous ne sommes pas n'importe quelle qualité de Nègres. Les yeux des Blancs n'ont jamais brûlé les nôtres (p.81).

Robert, my second son married a white lady that he met while working in a post office in the metropolis. I wept bitterly because we are not just any kind of Negroes. The white men's eyes have never burnt ours. (our translation)

This shows the severity of cultural marital barrier between the community and the foreigners. Man Sonson does not expect her son to marry a white woman as a result of different cultural backgrounds and

unfriendly attitude of the Whites towards the Blacks. The Whites only take advantage of the innocent, timid and uneducated girls so as to satisfy their irrational sexual urge. Marriage is completely forbidden with Black girls. Condé draws our attention to Gabriel Lameaulnes in her text, a béké, who is ostracized for marrying a Black woman. She states:

La même année que Gabriel, le premier Lameaulnes, un béké de la Martinique, chassé par sa famille parce qu'il s'était marié avec une négresse (p.20).

The same year that Gabriel, the first of the Lameaulnes' lineage, a béké from Martinique, was chased away by his family because he got married to a Black lady. (our translation)

It obviously shows that the two racial groups are nursing intense fear for one another as a result of xenophobia and this ultimately prevents inter-cultural marriage.

Apart from the trauma of xenophobia, Condé also uses her novel to illustrate the trauma of death among her characters. Death is an important event that provokes emotional, social and economic interruption in the deceased's immediate family. It brings about various burial activities and ceremonies based on the ethnic, cultural and religious background of the deceased. This impromptu event makes survivors to assume new responsibilities which they do not plan for but which fate has placed on them. They achieve this in most cases by redefining and reorganizing themselves in line with the new reality. Among the numerous burial activities and ceremonies is the wake that is normally organised on the eve of the burial. The relatives, members of the extended family and neighbours are opportune during this ceremony to express their minds about the deceased. This forum also affords sympathisers the opportunity to learn more about the deceased, assess their ways of life and also plan for the future. Death is not only a sober occurrence but it is being used by the author as a narrative of the Caribbean cultural system.

Maryse Condé presents death as an inevitable event that occurs even when one does not expect it. This belief makes Sanchez to be constantly traumatised because he believes that he is being haunted by the spirit of death as a result of his uneasy obsession with the past and his conviction that his life will soon end. He says thoughtfully: *l'histoire, c'est mon cauchemar; history is my nightmare*. This assertion indicates his sense of trauma being provoked by continued flashback of his frightful past. Though dreadful and traumatic, he is forced to accept the reality whenever it happens because there is time for everything. He remarks thus:

Mais la mort est la mort. Quand elle passe respectez – la! Il y a un temps pour tout, il y a sous le ciel un moment pour chaque chose. Il y a un temps pour naître et pour mourir, un temps pour planter et un temps pour arracher ce qui a été planté, un temps pour tuer et un temps pour guérir, un temps pour gémir et un temps pour sauter de joie. Il y a un temps pour jeter des pierres et un temps pour les ramasser.

But death is death. When it occurs, respect it! There is time for all, there is time for everything. There is time to be born and time to die. There is time to plant, there is time to harvest all that has been planted. There is time to kill and time to heal, time to groan in pains and time to jump for joy. (our translation)

Sanchez's statement is Condé's subtle but structured allusion to the Holy Scriptures. It shows the inevitability of death which can strike when one least expects it and it does not have any consideration for age or sex. Nobody expected Sanchez to pass on when death struck and also the manner of his death is not only mysterious but exceedingly puzzling. Condé asserts that:

A l'en croire, en dépit des apparences, même s'il n'y avait ni sang ni blessure sur le corps, cette mort ne pouvait être naturelle.

Believing such a story in spite of the glaring facts could make account of the death unnatural. This is even when there was no bleeding or wounds on the corpse. (our translation)

The villagers are of the opinion that Sanchez does not merit the peaceful death that terminated his life given his sexual atrocities. They think his death should have been violent and gruesome. Condé presents Loulou, one of the villagers, who thinks that Sanchez does not merit peaceful death. Loulou opines that:

Non, non, non! Ce n'est pas ainsi qu'il aurait dû mourir, Trop propre, trop douce, cette mort! C'est la cervelle à l'air, éparpillée jusqu'aux lianes – trompette, le sang baignant les lichens et les mousses qu'on aurait dû le trouver (p.123).

No, no, no! That is not the way he should have died. His death had been too clean, too gentle. They should have found him with his brain shot out, splattered among the trumpet vines, soaking the lichen and moss with his blood. (our translation)

The statement shows the enormity of hatred that the villagers harbour towards Sanchez even in death. They do not conceal their ill feelings for the unwanted and slothful stranger who only takes delight in putting young girls in family way. The villagers are not satisfied with the peaceful manner of his death. The author also introduces Léocadie Timothée who rejoices over the death of Sanchez and who believes that God has answered her prayer by taking away the racist. She says triumphantly:

Je ne vous le cache pas, j'ai souhaité à cet homme-là, qui était venu planter le malheur chez nous, beaucoup de mal et je crois bien que pour une fois le bon Dieu m'a écoutée (p.151).

I am not hiding it from you; I wished so much evil for that man who brought us misfortune. And I believe that God for once listened to me. (our translation)

The statement demonstrates the frankness of Timothée who does not betray any emotion in making her opinion about Sanchez's death known. She asserts that even God is angry with Sanchez for his sexual and racist misdeeds. As far as she is concerned, Sanchez deserves his untimely death.

To some other villagers, Sanchez's death depicts vengeance,

vengeance for his sexual misdeeds and other racist tendencies perpetrated by him. They believe God deliberately terminated his life so as to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies in the village. Carmélien remarks that:

Aujourd'hui, Francis Sanchez était mort. Une main secrète avait accompli la vengeance à laquelle sa lâcheté ne se décidait pas. Il n'aurait donc plus à soutenir son regard ou à l'aveugler. La route était libre (p.183).

Today, Francis Sanchez is no more. An unknown person had secretly carried out a revenge mission that was not fully carried out because of his cowardice. Therefore, he will no longer have to keep or hide his appearance. The road is free. (our translation)

The villagers believe that Sanchez's death is to avenge his numerous sexual escapades among his other evildoings.

It is, however, interesting to observe that there are authentic mourners who feel that Sanchez's death is not only untimely but also undeserving. Man Sonson opines that he likes Sanchez and he does not entertain any fear to disclose this. He prays for the repose of his soul and also wishes that his soul finds peace that eludes him on earth. He notes soberly:

J'aimais Francis Sanchez, je n'ai pas peur de le dire et je souhaite que son âme trouve le repos qu'il n'a pas connu dans sa vie de vivant, inquiet, angoissé, toujours en mouvement qu'il était (p.85).

I loved Francis Sanchez, I am not afraid to say it. I wish his soul would find eternal rest it didn't enjoy while he was alive. His life was fraught with worries and agonies without any succour. (our translation)

We can infer here that Sanchez is partly vindicated because no one would have thought that he has admirers given the number of his countless enemies. Furthermore, Man Sonson makes us to understand that the number of people that mourned him genuinely and of those

that wished him eternal rest is so negligible. He remarks painfully: «Pauvre Francis Sanchez! Bien rares ceux qui l'aident à trouver la porte de la vie éternelle» (p.89). [*Poor Francis Sanchez! Quite few are those who are mourning him! Quite few are also those who helped him find the gate to eternal life*].

Condé has been able to demonstrate the transformative power of death through the assemblage of Sanchez's enemies. Despite the villagers' animosity for Francis, death overpowers their feelings and brings them together. Quite a number of them were surprised by the power of death which enables them to experience self-assessment of their attitudes towards one another and especially towards the deceased. Loulou asks some rhetorical questions to acknowledge the power of death.

Pourquoi la mort a-t-elle ce pouvoir? Pourquoi impose-t-elle silence aux haines, violences, rancœurs et nous force-t-elle à nous agenouiller à deux genoux quand elle apparaît? Bien plus! Elle se hâte de transformer les esprits (p.124).

Why does death have this power? Why does it silent hatreds, violence and bitterness and force us to bend down on two knees when it turns up? And even more than that, it hastens to transform people's mind. (our translation)

Condé equally shows the unifying power of death through her text. She has also been able to use death as a weapon of self-awakening and self-assessment. All the mourners who are present during his wake experience personal sober reflection of their lifestyle prompting some of them to make positive resolutions towards changing their behaviour because nobody knows when his own time will come like the deceased.

Maryse Condé attempts in her text to reflect on the precarious sexual life in the Caribbean region where young boys and girls engage in unguarded, unhealthy and unprotected sex. This in most cases results into unwanted and conflict-prone pregnancies with corresponding increase in the number of fatherless children. The author tries to expose the sexual scourge that is so prevalent in the Caribbean island

with a view to rectifying the sexual malaise. She feels upset by the number of young people battling with one sexual disease or the other. She remarks in the text:

Dans ce pays, la vie sexuelle de tout homme est un marécage dans lequel il ne fait pas bon mettre le pied. Pourquoi prétendez-vous assécher celui-là? Et de rappeler à tout un chacun les filles engrossées, les vierges dépucelées, les enfants sans papa reconnu qu'il avait semés à tout vent (p.225).

In this country the sexual life of every man is precarious and people are advised to desist from such act. Why do you claim to have ruined that man? You remind every one of the impregnated girls, the deflowered girls and the fatherless children that he had brought to this world at the slightest opportunity. (our translation)

The above statement shows clearly that the author is concerned about the rate of sexual recklessness in her region. She denounces the worrisome level of moral decadence among Caribbean youths which portends great danger for the future of the region. She is more preoccupied with the fate of teenage mothers and their offspring, who, in most cases, do not have any bread-winner and also with the alarming rate at which innocent virgin girls are being deflowered.

The author introduces Dinah who recites a poem which her mother taught her, she tries to educate young Caribbean girls about the difference between love and infatuation. She is obsessed by the pain, disappointment and shame that these young girls experience as a result of young men who take undue advantage of their naivety. She insists that these girls are being deceived by infatuation and not real love because the young men only pretend to like them – for the purpose of having carnal knowledge of them. She expresses her mind through this short poem:

Ah, n'aimez pas, n'aimez pas sur cette terre. Quand l'amour s'en va, Il ne laisse que les pleurs! Ah n'aimez pas, n'aimez pas sur cette terre. Quand l'amour s'en va, Il ne laisse que les pleurs! J'ai pris mon cœur, J'ai donné à un ingrat. A un jeune homme sans conscience, Qui ne connaît pas l'amour (p.128).

Ah! Do not love, do not love on this earth! When love disappears, it only leaves mourning! I took my heart, and I gave it to an ingrate, a young man without conscience who does not understand the language of love. (our translation)

As far as Dinah is concerned, true love does not exist because of the unpleasant consequences which include humiliation, regret, and tears among others. She considers most young men as ingrates who never reciprocate the love being shown by unsuspecting innocent girls. These men turn around to make the girls look stupid and ridiculed by their action. Condé introduces us to Francis Sanchez's antics when he says that he does not invite Mira, one of his numerous girlfriends to his house. He says that Mira comes on her own without being invited and so he cannot be held responsible for her pregnancy. Sanchez says unrepentantly:

Je ne lui ai pas demandé de venir. C'est elle qui est venue. Je ne la retiens pas. Au contraire, Depuis qu'elle est là, je lui demande de retourner chez elle (p.70).

I did not ask her to come. She came uninvited. I am not keeping her. On the contrary, I have been asking her to go back to her place ever since she came around. (our translation)

Sanchez tries to not only humiliate Mira but also ridicule her, he tends to present Mira as the one trying to pressurise him for love and most likely for sex. He does this to exonerate himself and to convince the villagers that he is not really interested in their girls. Sanchez refuses to marry this girl even after putting her in the family way. He says arrogantly:

Epousez – la, épousez – la. Elle n'a pas mérité cela! Je ne peux pas, je ne peux pas. Il ne faut même pas qu'elle garde cet enfant. Je le lui ai dit depuis le début. Mais les femmes n'écoutent jamais quand on leur parle. Je ne suis pas venu ici pour planter des enfants et les regarder marcher sur cette terre. Je suis venu mettre un point final, terminer, oui, terminer une race maudite (p.87).

Marry her, marry her. She did not deserve that privilege! I can't, I can't. She did not even need to keep the child. I told

her right from the beginning. But women never listened when advised. I have not come here to make babies, and watch them walk about everywhere. I have come to put a full stop, or stop this practice of breeding a cursed generation. (our translation)

He states unequivocally that his relationship with the Black girls cannot result in marriage because he is not interested in unhealthy procreation but to put an end to a cursed race. He does this so as to prevent his offspring from experiencing the similar fate that is about to befall him. He is convinced that his death is imminent and he is often traumatised by the constant reminder of death. He remarks emotionally:

Il ne faut pas que cet enfant – là ouvre ses yeux au jour. Il ne faut pas. Un signe est sur lui, comme sur moi. Il vivra une vie de malheur et pour finir, il mourra comme un chien, comme je vais bientôt mourir. Si je suis venu ici, c'est pour en finir. Boucler la boucle. Tirer le trait final, tu comprends. Revenir à la case départ et tout arrêter... (p. 109).

This child must not open his eyes to the light of the day. We must not. A sign is upon him, as on me. He will live a life of misfortune and eventually he will die like a dog, as I will soon die. If I came here, it is to stop. To buckle the buckle. Shoot the final stroke, you understand. Go back to square one and stop everything. (our translation)

As much as one is forced to have sympathy for Sanchez, such sympathy is however limited given the cruel manner that he treats the numerous girls, after putting them in family way. Vilma narrates painfully her experience after telling Sanchez about her pregnancy:

Quand j'ai été enceinte, je le lui ai dit, il est resté sans parler... Est – ce que tu as entendu ce que je viens de dire?... Il s'est tourné vers les planches de la cloison, me donnant son dos pour toute réponse... Pourquoi te mets – tu en colère parce que mon ventre est fertile? Toi qui as si peur de la mort, est – ce que tu ne sais pas que l'enfant est son seul remède? (p.194).

When I was pregnant, I told him, he remained speechless ... Did you hear what I have just said? ... He turned to the planks of the partition, giving me his back for any answer ... Why do you get angry because my belly is fertile? You, who are so

afraid of death, don't you know that the child is the only remedy? (our translation)

Vilma is disappointed by Sanchez's behaviour, she finds it difficult to believe that her boyfriend can be so blunt even without betraying any emotion. She realises amazingly that there is no genuine love between them, but this self-awakening appears to be belated because of her pregnancy.

There is manifestation of 'id', one of the three main components of psychoanalytic theory which is the theoretical principle upon which this study is based. The 'id is the aspect of personality that is driven by internal and basic drives and needs. These are typical instinctual, such as hunger, thirst and the drive for sex or libido. It is apparent that Sanchez is being influenced by irrational drive for sex with the innocent girls even when he knows that he will not marry any of them. Surprisingly, the comportment of some of the girls leaves much to be desired or how else does one explain Mira's decision to remain with Sanchez even after realizing that he does not have any marital plan for her. She states:

Cet homme-là aussi que j'avais cru différent n'était qu'un assassin. Il l'avait dit lui-même, un bourreau. Un sentiment insidieux, au goût inconnu, la révolte, me prenait. Une question qu'il m'avait d'ailleurs posée ne me laissait plus de répit. Pourquoi restions nous à l'attache ? Oui pourquoi ? Je me la posais, jour et nuit (p.109).

This man, whom I had thought differently, was nothingbut a murderer. He had said it himself, a hangman. An insidious feeling of unknown taste, revolt, took hold of me. A question he had asked me no longer left me any respite. Why do we stay attached? Yes why? I asked myself, day and night. (our translation)

This is a clear case of irrational behaviour that is being motivated or facilitated by the desire for sex and wrong notion of love. Mira does not see anything wrong in Sanchez's uncaring and insensitive behaviour. She chooses to remain with him despite the fact that she is

being unfairly and scornfully treated. The irrational desire for sex by Sanchez prompts the villagers to refer to him as a 'dog'. Loulou observes scornfully: «*Ce sont des bêtises! Tout ce que je sais, chien, C'est que tu vas payer pour cela*» (p.70). [*These are nonsense! All I know, dog, is that you'll pay for it*]. This statement attests to the fact that Sanchez is promiscuous and this is one of the reasons why the villagers hate him even after his death. Aristide says angrily in reaction to the awful manner of putting his sister in family way: "*Il a violé ma soeur et tu viens devant moi me dire qu'il n'est pas mauvais*" (p.74). [*He violated my sister and you come before me to tell me it is not bad*]. The atmosphere during the wake of Francis Sanchez is not only pathetic but irritating when the young girls impregnated by him appeared one after the other with their hands pitifully placed on their bellies. The author states scornfully: '*Les femmes enceintes portèrent les mains à leurs ventres où ruèrent les foetus apeurés*'. [*The pregnant women put their hands on their stomachs. The unborn babies were frightened and they rushed up and down*]. The trauma of these innocent girls and their parents is better imagined than experienced. The pain of parenting children whose father's identity is not known and the fear of widowhood stigma awaiting the young girls at such a tender age. The ugly incident is synonymous to a tragedy befalling the girls' parents, that is, being obliged to live up to unforeseen responsibilities that fate has placed on them.

The Trauma of Unknown Identity

Maryse Condé also explores the trauma of identity which has been the main preoccupation of most contemporary Black Caribbean writers. These writers deal thoroughly with the concept of identity in different ways and through different perspectives. This is quite expected given the common ancestry of African-Americans and peoples from the Caribbean island during the triangular trade of 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Several European nations occupied the African continent and took possession of her physical and human resources. Many young men and women were taken away as slaves and were forcibly separated from their homeland, thereby ending up in Caribbean plantations or in North America. These slaves were robbed of their

self-dignity, cultural heritage and identity by their owners in order to prevent uprising. However, there were slave uprisings which eventually led to its abolition. Unfortunately, the abolition alone could not restore the dignity of these slaves without recourse to their source or roots which would help in rehabilitating them and reconnecting them to their source. Having been robbed of their ego, their integrity, their labour and their identity, most African ex-slaves were forced to search for their source, moving from society to society. It is from this lens of lack of identity and historical ambiguity that many Caribbean and African writers decide to trace their origins so as to discover their authentic identity. In the same vein, Condé presents in her text different characters who are longing for a coherent sense of belonging and identity. The characters are stalled by their own obsession with unresolved past desires, grief and hatreds. The text mirrors the isolation pervading the day-to-day life of those characters and the resultant uneasy calm, silence, grief, and unproductivity. Condé attaches great importance to the trauma of identity in her various texts. She introduces Mira, one of the young girls impregnated by Sanchez who is obsessed by her boyfriend's identity. As much as she pretends to like Sanchez, she is worried and traumatised about her inability to decipher his authentic identity. Sanchez himself complicates her ordeals as he chooses to conceal his identity making it difficult for the poor girl to unravel his ambiguous identity. Mira expresses her ordeal in this manner:

Je ne comprends plus pourquoi j'avais placé tous mes espoirs sur cet homme – là que je ne connaissais ni en Blanc ni en Noir. Sans doute parce qu'il venait d'Ailleurs.

I no longer understand why I have placed all my hopes on that man whom I neither knew as a white man nor black man. Certainly because he came from elsewhere. (our translation)

The statement demonstrates self-consciousness or self-awakening after being carried away initially by infatuation. Mira is now conscious of the impending challenges, danger, stigma and trauma of her present condition. She does not understand the rationale for placing so much hope in a man whom she knows little or nothing about his origin. She

considers Sanchez as a nomadic personality who either wanders without a definite destination or who has come to their village to make up for his past misdeeds. She remarks ignorantly and unconvincingly:

Aie, c'était un vagabond qui est venu enterrer sa pourriture chez nous! On ne sait même pas si c'était un Blanc, un Nègre, un Zindien. Il avait tous les sangs dans son corps (p.229).

Aie, he was a vagabond who came to bury his rot in us! We do not even know if he was a White, a Negro, a Zindian. He had all the blood in his body. (our translation)

One can clearly see Mira's ignorance about the authentic complexion of her boyfriend who is neither White nor Black. Although the author makes it abundantly clear in the text that Sanchez is a descendant of a béké or half-caste, that is a product of mixed race. Mira finds it difficult to describe or identify a man who is neither White nor black. She concludes by saying that Sanchez is a man of different bloods.

The author also introduces Dodose Pélagie, in an attempt to unravel the ambiguous identity between the Africans and Caribbean people. Initially, Maryse Condé is of the opinion that the authentic source of the Caribbean people is Africa and she demonstrates this belief in some of her novels. She states emphatically in one of her texts:

Ah, l'Afrique, c'est un des éléments qui m'a singularisé parmi les Antillais. J'ai été le premier à leur parler de l'Afrique. Non pas que je la connaisse tellement bien, mais j'ai toujours l'habitude de dire que l'Afrique fait partie de moi-même... je dois beaucoup à l'Afrique. C'est elle qui m'a permis de connaître moi-même. Je ne me suis compris que lorsque j'ai connu des Africains et je n'ai compris l'Afrique que lorsque j'en ai fait le détour par l'Afrique. On ne peut pas comprendre les Antilles sans l'Afrique (p.110).

Ah! Africa, it is one of the elements that singled me out among the Caribbean. I was the first to talk to them about Africa. Not that I know it so well, but I am used to saying that Africa is part of me... I owe a lot to Africa. It was Africa which enabled me to know myself. I only knew myself when I knew Africans

and I only comprehended Africa when I passed Africa to reach it. One cannot comprehend the Caribbeans without Africa. (our translation)

This shows Condé's initial opinion about Africa. But having lived in some African countries and experienced hostile reception from indigenous African people and also realising the differences in cultural practices, she becomes conscious of the fact that it is erroneous to consider African and Caribbean people as being from the same cultural origin. She demonstrates this belief through one of her characters in the text, Dodose pélagie, who states convincingly that:

C'est une erreur de croire qu'Africains et Antillais ont quoi que ce soit en commun, hormis la couleur de la peau (p.207).

It is a mistake to believe that Africans and Caribbean have anything in common, apart from the color of the skin. (Our translation)

She becomes conscious of the fact that the only similarity between the Caribbean and Africans is the black colour. For this reason, the Caribbean decided to down play their so-called African identity. They are convinced that Africa as a continent cannot help them in realising their authentic Caribbean aspirations.

Conclusion

Condé's text, *Traversée de la mangrove* depicts a traumatic, difficult, mysterious and interminable adventure. It is an endless literary narration that is devoid of a definite end. The protagonist himself, Sanchez, admits that his text demonstrates an endless search which is already doomed before being written. The text is described as an enigma that is capable of provoking unending literary discourse. Sanchez is conscious of the fact that he will not be able to complete this text which will generate much riddle. He states assertively:

D'ailleurs, je ne finirai jamais ce livre puisque, avant d'en avoir tracé la première ligne et de savoir ce que je vais y mettre de sang, de rire, de larmes, de peurs, d'espoirs, enfin tout ce qui fait qu'un livre est un livre et non pas une dissertation de raseur, la tête à demi fêlée, j'en ai déjà trouvé le titre *Traversée*

de la mangrove (...).

Besides, I will never finish this book because, before I have even written the first line and known what I am going to put in the way of blood, laughter, tears, fears and hope, well everything that make a book, a book and not a boring dissertation by a half-cracked individual. I have already found the title, *Crossing the Mangrove*. (our translation)

Crossing the Mangrove is presented as an uphill task which will be extremely difficult to realise. Francis Sanchez readily agrees and admits this fact, thereby educating us about the motive of his text which he knows already will remain uncompleted. He considers the text as a suicidal crossing in which he who begins writing is conscious of creating a space where one is impaled, buried and where one suffocates. In essence, to confess a desire to cross the mangrove swamp is to admit its impossibility. The mangrove swamp can then be understood as the mystery of untraversable and unresolvable space, just as the text cannot be completed as it is impossible to write. Sanchez's desire to remain inside the riddle demonstrates his need to inscribe himself in that space, the mangrove, rather than crossing it. Each character's story that is triggered by Sanchez's death ends inevitably with the firm resolution to unravel the mystery of his death. To this end, one of his girlfriends is determined to discover the truth about this stranger who chooses to die in their community. She remarks:

Alors, moi, je dois découvrir la vérité. Désormais, ma vie ne sera qu'une quête. Je retracerai les chemins du monde... Ma vie commence avec sa mort (p.231).

So, I have to discover the truth. From now on, my life will be a quest. I shall retrace my steps along the path of this world ... My real life begins with his death. (Our translation)

Crossing the mangrove is a text that provokes interminable literary discourse because the end of the text seems like the beginning of unending literary puzzle.

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